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## UNITED STATES CURRENCY.

To an ordinary British citizen, a currency difficulty is something of a mystery. He goes about his daily business, settling his minor transactions in the gold and silver coin of the realm, with the occasional use in England of a five or ten pound note, and the more frequent one in Scotland of the pound notes in such active circulation. The weekly return of the Bank of England is about the last thing in the world he ever dreams of studying, and if he did, the chances are he would not understand it. He knows there is sufficient gold there to cash all the notes he is ever likely to have, and still leave a little in the vaults for the next comer, and consequently goes on his way with contentment. The cables from the United States, which have for some time past been published almost daily in the leading newspapers, are apt, therefore, to bother him, and he wants to know what all the fuss is about.

In the first place, the foundations on which the currencies of the two countries are built are radically different. The note-issuing institutions in Great Britain are joint-stock chartered institutions, in which the public are stockholders, and which are absolutely free from any departmental control of Government, although the issues are regulated by Act of Parliament. A certain reserve must be maintained in gold coin or bullion, and the balance must be covered by high-class interest-bearing securities, such as consols. But in the United States, the national Treasury is the issuing and controlling institution for the greater part of the note circulation, which is largely in excess, both actually and in proportion to population, as compared with this country. Notes are issued there from one dollar upwards, and coin, except for the fractional parts of a dollar, is unpopular and little used. The Treasury is legally enjoined to hold in reserve a certain amount of gold against its notes, a

much smaller percentage, however, than the Bank of England, and the remainder is covered simply by the national credit. When the Bank of England loses too much of its gold, it has to sell a portion of its securities to increase its stock; but when the United States Treasury is in a similar position, it has no negotiable securities to fall back upon, and is compelled, therefore, to borrow from the public. That is what is taking place at the present time, only as fast as the Treasury is replenished, the gold is drawn out again for reasons which we have now to consider.

The existing currency arrangements date no further back than the civil war, some four and thirty years ago. Previous to that period, there had been many rash experiments, and much ensuing trouble. As far back as the War of Independence, there had been a paper currency, and from that moment the nation might be divided economically into two camps, hard money men and soft money men. The former contended that all financial settlements should be effected in gold or silver dollars of full value; the latter always hankered to make legal tender something that was not as good as honest metallic dollars, and so inflate the currency. First one party and then the other gained the upper hand, but the result of a temporary victory of soft money principles was one of the worst panics the country has ever experienced, in the year 1837, when there was scarcely a solvent bank or mercantile establishment left in the States. Hard money then won the day, and in 1840 it was resolved that all payments made to or by the Treasury must be in gold or silver. That meant that all lands sold by Government had to be paid for in that way, and the principal object of inflation was to buy those lands cheap. With that wonderful recuperative power, which has been the marvel as well as the envy of the older European states, the United States shook off the effects of the disaster, and twenty years later, had practically liquidated their national

debt, and established their currency on a sound hard money basis.

Then followed the ever memorable struggle between North and South, which for several years engaged the attention of every active citizen, and brought the industrial work of the country almost to a standstill. Both sides were soon short of money, and had to resort to various expedients to raise it. The South issued Confederate bonds, and sold them for whatever they would fetch, many English sympathisers investing in them at low prices, only to lose whatever they put in them. The North began to issue the famous greenbacks, so-called from the colour in which the back of the notes was printed, and in February 1862, decreed by Act of Congress that they should be legal tender. At first they passed current for very nearly their face value, but soon underwent a rapid depreciation, and by the middle of the same year, were worth little more than half the gold or silver dollar. This process continued, until two years later the paper dollar was worth barely forty cents in good money. But in the meantime another step had been taken. The Government of the North found it quite impossible to go on issuing greenbacks in unlimited quantities, and like the South, was compelled to borrow in interest-bearing bonds. As an inducement to banks to subscribe freely for these, the National Bank Act was passed in 1863, by which properly constituted banks were authorised to issue notes up to ninety per cent. of the face value of any bonds they held and lodged with the Treasury. Thus came into existence the two principal paper issues of the United States, the greenbacks, or, as they are officially called, legal tender notes, and the national bank-notes.

Soon after the conclusion of the war, the struggle between the hard and soft money men was renewed. There was a fairly general consensus of opinion that the national debt, then somewhere about five hundred millions sterling, must be reduced, if not paid off entirely, but one side wished also to resume specie payments, while the other insisted on the greenbacks, amounting to about three hundred and fifty million dollars (£70,000,000), remaining inconvertible. It was decreed, however, that payment should be resumed on the 1st January 1879, and that for that purpose, the Treasury should never hold a less sum than one hundred million dollars in gold, or a reserve equal to nearly thirty per cent. The quantity in circulation was not to be increased; the nation was by that time again advancing in prosperity by leaps and bounds, debt was being rapidly discharged, and as the banks had to relinquish the bonds to the Government, they were compelled to withdraw the notes issued against them. Thus the very awkward predicament arose, of a rapidly increasing trade having to be carried on with a constantly decreasing currency, and a fresh agitation for inflation sprang up.

In the meantime, however, another very important event had happened; Germany had demonetised silver in 1873. Up to that year, the gold and silver dollar had always been of intrinsically the same value, but in Acts relat-

ing to legal tender, the gold dollar only was accustomed to be mentioned, probably only by accident, as there was then no idea that silver was about to undergo any severe depreciation. But when that metal began to fall rapidly in value, those interested in the silver-mines of the West conceived that they had been tricked, and joined hands with the 'soft money' men for the reinstatement of the silver dollar in the currency as full legal tender. That meant in reality a change from a gold to a silver standard, because, when silver had depreciated twenty per cent., nobody would pay a gold dollar when a silver one worth eighty cents would discharge the debt. The outcome of the movement was the passing of the Bland Act in 1878, under which a quantity of silver was to be purchased by Government every month sufficient to coin two and a half million standard silver dollars. With great effort about fifty millions of these dollars were forced into circulation, until at last the American people rebelled, and would take no more of a coin nearly equal in size to our five-shilling piece, which, on account of its unwieldiness went at one time by the designation of 'a cart wheel.' But the coinage had to go on, in accordance with the Act, and the question arose, what was to become of it? It was answered by a decision to issue certificates against it, and so during the twelve years that the act remained in operation, silver certificates or notes for upwards of three hundred million dollars (£60,000,000) were issued, and put into circulation.

Everything apparently went well, and the prophecies of the bankers and capitalists of the Eastern States, to the effect that the country would pass to a silver standard, were entirely falsified. Two things had in fact been going on during those twelve years to delay the inevitable result—the expansion of the country required a constantly expanding currency, and the withdrawal of national bank-notes at the same time created an additional opening. The three hundred and sixty million silver dollars therefore, mostly in the form of paper, proved no incubus, and circulated side by side with the gold ones, particularly as they were tenderable to Government in payment of all taxes and customs duties. But in spite of the absorption of so much silver, that metal had gone on declining in value, and the silver party in America, determined to give it a lift, and emboldened by their previous success, sought to improve upon the Bland Act. In 1890 they substituted the Sherman Act for it, by which the Government was compelled to purchase every month four and a half million ounces of silver at the market price, deposit it in the vaults of the Treasury at Washington, and issue in payment to the sellers, notes payable in either silver or gold at the option of the Secretary to the Treasury. It had taken twelve years under the Bland Act to issue three hundred million paper dollars, but in three years of the Sherman Act, one hundred and fifty millions more were issued, at a time too when trade had begun to decline, and the redemption of debt had ceased, and the withdrawal of national bank-notes in consequence suspended.

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It is not to be wondered at, that the long-deferred crisis eventually arrived, and the process of piling up liabilities against unrealisable assets had to be stopped. In the midst of another panic, only less severe than that of 1837, the Sherman Act was repealed; but the mischief had already been accomplished, and the United States, instead of the usual quick recovery, has been sinking deeper and deeper in the mire. European, and more especially British investors, fearful of having to accept silver in exchange for the gold they lent, have been withdrawing their capital wholesale, and demanding its repayment in gold. The Treasury has been constantly exhausted by the presentation of greenbacks for payment, to secure the necessary supplies; and in addition fully one half the Sherman notes, issued in payment for silver, have been presented and cashed in gold. The strain would have been less severe had all these notes so cashed been cancelled, or put away for future issue in prosperous days. But the ordinary finances of the country have fallen into confusion, the national expenditure has largely exceeded the national income, and deficit has been followed by deficit, until the total in three years will amount in all probability to thirty millions sterling. Instead of raising this money by increased taxation, or by borrowing on interest-bearing bonds, the notes presented for payment have been made use of, and paid out again in settlement of the ordinary demands on the Treasury, and so the candle has been burned at both ends. If Europe goes on selling its securities, there will not be anything like sufficient gold to pay for them, and the United States themselves will have to be taken in pawn.

There is one other form of currency still to be mentioned—namely, gold certificates. But these are only issued, dollar for dollar, against gold deposited with the Treasury and ear-marked, and they are only comparable to our sovereigns and half-sovereigns. Americans, however, dislike coin, and prefer money in this form, so that these certificates do not really enter into the present controversy at all.

President Cleveland is to be commiserated, and not blamed for the present state of affairs, at any rate in so far as it has not been intensified by his recent message on the Venezuelan question. He has boldly confronted, and sought to solve the difficulty, but has been hampered in every movement by an unsympathetic and adverse Congress, which refuses to adopt any scheme he proposes. The credit of the country, with its immense natural wealth, is practically unimpaired, and money could be borrowed in abundance on easy terms, were repayment guaranteed in gold. But Congress will sanction no gold loans, and the President is compelled to exercise such powers as he possesses, to borrow subject to repayment in coin, which may mean silver. The terms therefore are comparatively onerous, in order to cover the risk, and four and five per cent. has to be paid, where otherwise three would be ample. During the year 1894, loans for one hundred million dollars were made on this basis; at the beginning of 1895, another was issued for sixty-two million dollars; and at the present time,

arrangements are in progress for a further sum of one or two hundred million dollars, the fate of which is hanging in the balance as this article is being written. The net result so far, however, is that the debt of the country has been increased by upwards of thirty millions sterling, bearing an annual interest charge of one and a half millions, with the prospect of indefinite addition to both. A heavy price to pay, undoubtedly, for experiments in currency, and an attempt to bolster up silver.

The immediate outlook would be utterly hopeless, were it not that there is much truth in the well-worn saying, 'the darkest hour is that before the dawn.' People on both sides of the Atlantic who have been working for, and confidently predicting an improvement in the situation, now admit that there is no prospect of a settlement until another President and Congress have been elected, and are able to act in harmony, which cannot be until the 1st of March 1897. The settlement of what has become so complicated a matter could certainly not be effected in a day or in a month. Yet it is sometimes asserted that, if resolutely dealt with, the currency question might be a thing of the past ere President Cleveland leaves the White House. Some insist that it could be done without loss to the foreign creditor, and with small loss to the American community, if only the United States would frankly recognise that the amount of gold required to restore confidence and place the finances on a sound basis is actually not to be obtained, and so adopt a silver currency—although it is admitted that most of the methods by which it is proposed to carry out this change are absolutely dishonest. Other authorities are content to fix their hopes on the definitive dispelling of all doubt as to what the financial unit is to be, and on the centralisation of the national banking system—possibly by the development of the existing clearing-house system.

## THE MASTER CRAFTSMAN.\*

### CHAPTER VI.—IN THE EVENING.

In the evening the other part of the bargain began.

'My turn now,' I said. 'If I can only get this aching out of my shoulders. I am now going to be your coach—a judicious coach. The first point, I am told, that a judicious coach observes, is never to teach more than is wanted. And the next thing is to rub in what he does teach—to rub it in by incessant repetition.'

'It will be labour thrown away,' he grumbled. 'You will never make a fine gentleman of me.'

'My dear cousin, I am not going to try. I am, however, going to make of you a man acquainted with, and accustomed to, the usages of society. You are to belong to the world of society, not of fashion. The House of Commons has still a large majority of men who belong to that world. A knowledge of their habits, I

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have already told you, is absolutely indispensable.'

'Oh! Very good, then, I am ready.' But he was not eager; he was rather glum about the work in hand.

'Yes, but you must be more than ready. You must be as eager to learn this branch of knowledge as any other. Don't grumble over it—like an unwilling schoolboy.'

'Look here, Sir George'—

'Don't call me Sir George to begin with. You are my cousin. Call me George, and I shall call you Robert.'

'Very well. I confess I don't like it. How would you like to be told that you don't know manners? Hang it, the thing sticks.'

'Let us say then, the manners of the West End. Don't let it stick, old man. Now listen. First of all you must have dress-clothes, and you must put them on every evening.'

'What the devil does a man want with dress-clothes?'

'I will tell you when I have time. Meanwhile you must have them. The next thing is that from the moment you leave Wapping till you get home again, you are not to speak one word concerning your projects, or your ambitions, or your opinions.'

'I don't mind that condition. No one but yourself does know my ambitions.'

'Very well, then, that's settled so far. Now let us sit down and consider my scheme.' We had now reached my chambers, and we were in the study where the lathe was. 'I have been making out a little skeleton scheme—in my head.'

'Let us hear it.' We sat down solemnly opposite each other to discuss this question seriously.

'What do we want? To make you a man of the world. Some things you won't want to learn—whist, billiards, lawn-tennis, dancing.'

'No,' he grinned, 'not billiards or dancing—or betting, or gambling.'

'The first thing, the most important thing, is to get the dinner arrangements right. With this view we will begin with a course of restaurants. I don't say that one meets with the very finest manners possible at a restaurant, but still the people who go there have at least got a veneer; they understand the elements. I need not tell you much. You will look about you and observe things and compare and teach yourself.'

'Well? We are to waste time and money over a needless and expensive late dinner, are we? And all because there's a way of holding a fork.'

'It is part of the programme. After a while I shall take you to the theatre, which is sometimes a very good school of manners, and there you will see, on and off the stage, ladies in their evening splendour.'

'Jezebels. Painted Jezebels.'

'Not all of them. A few, perhaps, here and there. Later on you will be able to distinguish Jezebel. But it is best not to think about that

lady. Remember that a well-dressed woman has never come within your experience, and it is time for you to make her acquaintance. After a week or two of restaurants I will take you to a club and introduce you to some of our fellows. You can sit quiet at first and listen. Their talk is not exactly intellectual, but it shows a way of looking at things.'

'I know. Like you talk. Just as if nothing mattered, and everything was all right and as it should be.'

'Not dogmatic nor downright. Not as if we were going to fight to the death for our opinions.'

'If the opinion is worth having, it is worth defending. You ought to fight for it.'

'My dear cousin, formerly opinions were distinct and clearly outlined. Nowadays there is so much to be said on the other side that all opinions have grown hazy and blurred. For instance, you want perhaps to pull down the House of Lords.'

'No, I don't. I want to reform the House.'

'Well, if you did you would be astonished to learn what a lot can be said for the peers, and how extremely dangerous it would be to pull down their House, because the House of Commons leans against it, and all the houses in the country lean against the House of Commons. When you have grasped that fact, where is the clearness of your opinion? Gone, sir—gone.'

'You think that you will change me completely, then.'

'Not quite completely. Only in certain points. I shall try to graft upon you the manner of a finished gentleman. No one could possibly look the part better. You might be an earl to look at. Of course, the garb will have to be reconsidered—those boots, for instance.' Robert looked quickly at mine as compared with his own, and blushed. He blushed at his own boots. This was a note of progress. 'But all in good time. You shall not present yourself in a drawing-room until you can enter it, and stand in it, and talk in it, as if you belonged to the world of drawing-rooms.'

Robert entered upon his part of his education with much the same enthusiasm as is shown by a dog of intelligence going off to be washed. It has to be done; he knows that; and he goes, but unwillingly. Nobody has any conception of the numberless little points in which Wapping may differ from Piccadilly. Wapping, you see, has so long been cut off from external influences. The influence of the clergy, beneficent in other respects, is not felt at the Wapping dinner-table. And the Burnikels, by the retirement of the other old families, the aristocracy of the quarter, have remained almost the only substantial people of the place. Therefore, for a great many years, they have lived alone; and their manners, as a natural consequence, have continued to be much the same as the manners of their forefathers.

Take, for instance, the ordinary dinner napkin. It is astonishing to note how many mistakes may be made with a simple dinner napkin, when a man takes one in hand for the first time. There were no dinner napkins at

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Wapping. There had been, many years ago, but they went out when forks came in. That is to say, so far as the children were concerned, just about two hundred years ago. The right handling of the dinner napkin can only be acquired by custom. So also with wine and wine-glasses. If you are perfectly ignorant of wine, except that the black kind is port, and the straw colour means sherry, and that either kind, but especially the former, may be exhibited on Sunday, you become bewildered with the amount of wine lore that one is supposed to know.

'You are getting on,' I remarked, after six weeks of almost heart-breaking work, because—I repeat that one would never believe that isolation could make such a difference—everything had to be learned. This young man was steeped in the things he had learned from books—political economy, history, sociology, philosophy, trade questions, practical questions—he was a most learned person; but of the things of which men talk, or men and women talk, he knew nothing, absolutely nothing. Art, poetry, fiction, the theatre, sport, games, things personal—which take up so large a share in the daily talk—on all these things he was mute. He came to the club with me, and sat perfectly silent; disdainful at first, but presently angry with himself for not being able to take a part, and with the fellows for talking on subjects so trifling.

'I'm a rank outsider,' he said. 'I heard one of them call me a rank outsider. Thought I couldn't hear him. If he'd said it in the street, I'd have laid him in the gutter. A rank outsider. Do you think, George, that you will ever make me anything else?'

'What does it matter if you are a rank outsider in some things? Patience, and let us go on.'

At first he grumbled; he could see no use in trifles, such as ceremonials of society. We have simplified these of late years; still, some forms remain.

'You will want to be received,' I told him, 'as a man of culture. These are the outward and visible forms of culture.'

He listened and reflected. Presently I observed that he took greater interest in things—he was realising what things meant. Finally, the recognition of things arrived quite suddenly. Then he grumbled no longer. He looked about him interested and amused. He sat out plays, and talked about the life pictured—a very queer sort of life it is, for the most part. As for the acting, he accepted the finest acting as part of the play, without comment. He was like an intelligent traveller—he wanted to know what it all meant, the complex civilisation of this realm: where the court comes in; what part is played in the daily life by the noble lords, whose House he was so anxious to improve for them, feeling quite capable of adjusting reforms and bringing the peers up-to-date by himself alone and unaided; how the church affects society; what are the powers and the limitations of money? what is the real influence of the press? what is the position of the professions? He wanted to know everything. As for me, I had never before asked

myself any of these questions, being quite satisfied with the little narrow world that surrounded me.

I tried to interest him in art. It was impossible: he said that he would rather look at a tree than the picture of a tree. I tried him with fiction. He said that the world of reality was a great deal more interesting than the world of imagination. I tried him with poetry. He said that if a thing had to be said it was best said in prose.

He wanted to survey the whole world, and to understand the whole world. When one assumes the attitude of an impartial inquirer and learns what can be said on the other side, the radical disappears and the reformer succeeds. There is, of course, the danger, if one inquires too long, and with more than a certain amount of sympathy, that the reformer himself may vanish, leaving the philosopher behind.

Robert was passing into the second stage. He snorted at things no longer; he rather walked round them, examined them, and inquired how they came.

'I confess,' he said, 'that I was ignorant when I came here. My knowledge was of books. Men and women I did not take into account. It is worth all the trouble of learning your confounded manners only to have found out the men and women.'

Here was the Reformer.

'The people at this end of the town,' he continued, 'are interesting partly because they have got the best of everything, and partly because they think themselves so important. They are not really important. The people who do nothing can never be important. The only important person is the man who makes and produces.'

Here was the Radical.

'You live in a little corner of the world; you are all living on the labour of others: you are beautifully behaved; you are, generally, I think, amiable; you look so fine and talk so well that we forget that you've no business to exist. It is a pleasure only to watch you. And you take all the luxuries just as if they naturally belonged to you. I like it, George; I am an outsider, but I like it.'

Here was the Philosopher.

'And what about the House?'

'Oh! I've begun to nurse my borough. I address the men every Sunday evening in a music hall. You may come and hear me, if you like.'

'What is your borough?'

'Shadwell, close by, where they know me and the boat-yard. The men come in crowds. Man! There is no doubt! They come, I say, in crowds. They fill the place; and mind you, I can move the people.'

'Good. If you can only move the House as well.'

'These fellows will carry me through. I'm sure of it. They are the pick of the working-men—Socialists, half of them—chaps, mind you, with a sense of justice.'

Here we had the Radical still.

'That means getting a larger share for themselves, doesn't it?'

'Sometimes. Motives are mixed. Well, I'm going to be Member for Shadwell—Independent Member. A General Election may at any moment be sprung upon us. And Lord! Lord! if I had gone into the House as I was six weeks ago!'

'Patience, my cousin, we have not quite finished yet. There's one influence wanting yet before you are turned out, rounded off, and finished up. Only one thing wanting, but a big thing.—No, I will tell you later on.'

### MAKING RAILWAY TICKETS.

THE railway ticket is quite a modern invention. There were none of them when some of us were boys, for the simple reason that there were no railways. Once introduced into our social system, however, they have multiplied like microbes, and the manufacture, distribution, collection, tabulating, destruction, and remanufacture has become a large and complicated business, employing great numbers of people, requiring enormous quantities of material, calling forth curious feats of mechanical ingenuity, and organising powers of a very high order.

Last year there were issued in the United Kingdom considerably over nine hundred and eleven millions of railway tickets, exclusive of season tickets and workmen's weekly tickets. It is not easy to realise such a number. Roughly speaking, if they had to be conveyed, say, from London to Edinburgh in a mass, it would require a hundred railway trucks, each carrying ten tons. If they were stacked one upon another in a single column, the pile would be nearly five hundred miles high; and if they were laid end to end in a line, it would exceed the length of the equator by about one-third. But no computations of this kind can convey anything like so impressive an idea of the magnitude of the yearly issue of railway tickets as can be gained by a stroll through one or two of the establishments in which they are manufactured.

Up till a few years ago the bulk of our railway tickets came from private factories in London and Manchester. Latterly, the larger railways have been setting up establishments of their own for printing their tickets, which, however, they still buy from outside workers in the form of 'blanks.' It might reasonably be expected that where the numbers required are so vast, the printing would be done in large sheets to be afterwards cut up into tickets. This, however, is not the way it is done. Pasteboard is specially made for the purpose, but it is sliced up into 'blank' tickets, each to be printed and numbered one by one afterwards.

To see the complete process of ticket-making one must go first to the pasteboard factory with its vast storage of paper, its huge caldrons of steaming paste, its hot chambers for rapid

drying, and its maze of machinery for pasting, pressing, rolling, colouring, and cutting up the sheets of board when made. Every part of the work is interesting to one who is unfamiliar with it. The process of pasting the sheets of paper to be put together to form the board is one that strikes the novice as a particularly simple and ingenious one. Very thin but very sticky paste is poured into a trough beneath two wooden rollers, one above the other. The bottom one just touches the surface of the paste and thus takes to itself a thin film of the fluid which it transfers in a perfectly smooth, even layer to the roller above it. This in its turn gives a thin coating to the under side of the sheets of paper as they pass swiftly over the top. As each sheet comes out from the pasting machine it is seized by an attendant who puts four of them together to make the 'pasteboard.' These fourfold sheets are now stacked up in a pile, and a screw-press is brought heavily down upon them to squeeze out of them all superfluous paste and to consolidate the paper. They are next dried by passing through heated chambers on an ingenious system of revolving tapes, for three-quarters of an hour, or it may be an hour and a half, according to circumstances. Tremendous hydraulic pressure is now employed to condense the newly formed board into a hard uniform material, and this is still further effected by passing sheet by sheet between steel rollers. If there is any colouring to be done, this is the next proceeding, and the sheets are rapidly passed through a machine which draws along their surface strips of flannel saturated in the proper colours. The cutting up comes next, and for this every sheet passes singly through two machines. One slices it into long strips, and the next cuts the strips into thirteen parts, each part forming a 'blank' ticket. They are now ready for printing either in another department of the same establishment, or in the ticket-printing establishments which, as it has been said, several of the great railways have set up for themselves.

The Great Western Railway was one of the first companies to engage in this business. For many years this company had a queer little factory down by the side of their line at the back of Paddington Station; but they have now a large and specially planned stationery and ticket depot, not far off at Westbourne Terrace. Another large establishment of the kind forms part of Euston Station, from which they turn out about a million tickets a week. From the Great Eastern extensive printing and stationery depot at Stratford they distribute even a larger number, the passengers on this great network of railways being even more numerous, though journeys on the average are not so long. They issue an enormous number of season tickets; nevertheless, they print about fifty-five millions of ordinary tickets in the course of the year. The Midland print their own tickets at Derby. The mechanism and the general system are practically the same in all of these establishments, as well as in the private factories from one or two of which many railways in many distant parts of the world are supplied.

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The printing-machines used in all these places vary somewhat in detail as improvements have been made on the earlier ones from time to time, but they are all alike in principle. They are very interesting pieces of mechanism. They will take the 'blanks' one by one, and, at a rate varying perhaps from ten thousand to fourteen thousand an hour, according to the character of the machine, they will print them—some of the machines, back and front—and number them consecutively. It is a curious process to watch. The blanks to be printed are placed in a pile in a sort of perpendicular spout that will hold some hundreds of them. This spout has an opening at the bottom, and when the machine is started, a little slip of metal, of just about the thickness of a ticket, makes a sharp dig at one end of the bottom blank and shoves it out from under the pile above it and starts it on a passage across the under side of a sort of bridge, a few inches long, connecting the two sides of the machine. The instant the blank shows its full length under the bridge, an inky forme pops up from below and prints its face, giving it at the same time a consecutive number, or two numbers if it is a return ticket. Here it would remain if it were not that another blank, pushed out in the same way, comes behind it and moves it on a stage, and a third comes behind the second, and a fourth after the third, and so on with the whole pile, each blank pushing its predecessors before it to receive the impression of the type. As each completed ticket arrives at the end of the bridge, a little metal plate, rather smaller than itself, bolts up beneath it and pushes it up into the bottom of another spout similar to the first, where it is caught by slight projections and held till the following one comes under it and heaves it up a little farther. Number three comes under number two, and number four under number three, and so on, the passage down one spout, across the bridge, and up the other side, being so swift that the eye cannot follow it unless the mechanism is slowed down for the purpose. If you take a perfect blank and tear a piece off it and put it in among the rest, it is curious to see how infallibly the machine will detect the irregularity. The mutilated little pasteboard goes jogging its way down the shoot among the rest, but the instant it comes to its turn to push out to be printed, there is a dead-stop. The mechanism flatly refuses to give its imprimatur to an imperfect blank, and it has to be removed before business can be resumed. It looks almost like a display of conscientious intelligence. The newest machines print back and front simultaneously, and the North Western Company have in addition a little contrivance which clips out a hole in the cardboard to indicate that it is a half-price ticket for a child, that being the plan adopted on this line instead of cutting the ticket in two diagonally as on most others.

This little contrivance, by the way, is the invention of the foreman in charge of the ticket-printing office at Euston, who also hit upon the improvement in the earlier forms of the machines by which the two printings were

done at once. The reward of this ingenious device should have been at least an important addition to the inventor's income from many years. He had no sooner got it to work, however, than he found, like Sir Fretful Plagiary, that somebody had appropriated his ideas before him. The thing had already been patented.

The numbering of the tickets, as it has already been said, is done by the machine, but it is so important a matter that it is considered expedient to check the accuracy of the enumerating part of the printing-machine by a second test. The completed tickets on removal from the receiving spout are therefore borne off to a second apparatus and deposited in another receiver, from which they are rushed through a counting mechanism at the rate of about twelve thousand an hour, the machine recording the number with all but infallible accuracy. If the records of the machines correspond with each other, it only remains now to tie the tickets up in convenient numbers. This is done by laying them in a sort of wooden tray with a screw arrangement for squeezing them together while they are tied round with twine ready for despatch to the various stations whose names they bear.

From these large depots of the several companies the new tickets are distributed all over the respective systems, and sooner or later most of them will find their way back again, dated and clipped, not a few of them broken and torn, dirty and disreputable in appearance. They have all of them done duty once, and some of them perhaps have been made to do it more than once. It may be that in the future they are destined, in another state of existence, to do pretty much the same round over and over again; for the original pulp of which they were made still has a market value, and they are only on their way back, it may be, to the paper-mill from which it is not improbable they have come. But as tickets they must first be so effectually destroyed as to obviate the possibility of further service without reconstruction from the very outset. They have all, of course, gone through the company's most elaborate system of book-keeping, and now they are done with. They are poured into a hopper such as one may see on the top of a mangold slicing-machine, and from the bottom of this they are discharged on to a broad, revolving leather band set with metal studs. By this they are carried forward, and, properly distributed, so as to insure that all shall be effectually destroyed, are tipped over among whirling blades that chop them up in fragments and shoot them down through a spout into a sack, which the machine will fill in a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes. As soon as a sack is filled, the mouth of it is tied up, and it is stowed away until a sufficient pile has accumulated, and the paper-maker comes and carries them off to the mill to be pulped and made again into paper, to be very likely used up again into pasteboard, and so to go out on another circular tour. It is an interesting process to follow through, but there is nothing in it half so interesting as the reflection that the whole of the vast system of organisation

and mechanism, of which this is only a very small incidental feature, has been completely evolved within the memory of all who have lived to about middle age.

## THE GIRDLETON GALLERY MYSTERY.

### CHAPTER IV.—CONCLUSION.

FOUR days passed, and no answer came from Annie Girdleton. Eltham had not looked for a prompt reply, since his ignorance of her address at Chester had obliged him to write to her at the St John's Wood house; but when the fifth and sixth days came and went without bringing a word, he began to fear that in the bustle preparing for the move to her new residence in Bayswater, Mrs Girdleton must have omitted to forward his letter. He chafed at the delay, for Welks had not come near him again, and he feared that the man had fulfilled his implied threat and sold his invaluable information to some private inquiry agent or detective who would speedily outstrip himself in the race.

The answer came at last, however; Eltham found it on his dinner-table one evening on returning to his lodgings, and pouncing hungrily upon it, threw himself into the arm-chair to luxuriate in the contents. It was plump to the touch: without doubt she had taken advantage of the 'peculiar circumstances' also, to relieve her feelings at the point of the pen. It was disappointing to find that the letter's portly form was due to a blank sheet accidentally enclosed; but no such hint was necessary to prove that the five lines composing the note, which lacked superscription, signature, and punctuation, had been written in great agitation.

*'I did send the letter to the gallery but I cannot tell you anything more I must not I can't and if you care for me don't ask why you would not if you knew how I have suffered since.'*

The sheet fluttered from Eltham's hand. He lay back in his chair, and cold perspiration broke out on his face as something that was more than suspicion seized him. His investigations were at an end; no need to ask why she could not answer his question; her note seemed to have torn a veil from his eyes, and piece by piece the evidence ranged itself to point with unsparring directness at Annie herself. He was almost surprised that he had not seen it before.

It went cruelly against the grain, but he was forced to admit that even without this incoherent note there was a case against her. Mrs Girdleton had spoken of the unpleasantness of their home life latterly. Eltham knew that Annie had bitterly resented the good-humoured contempt with which her father had 'stopped the nonsense' as he phrased it; Mr Girdleton

had tactlessly exhibited his disregard of her feelings until their relations grew so strained that Mrs Girdleton had plucked up courage to arrange for her daughter to leave home for a time. The picture had been cut on the day before she left London; and on that day—well, there was the information drawn from Mrs Markham's page. And if this letter was not the confession born of remorse, what could it be? But how should Annie have known that Welks' wife was ill? Eltham clutched at the straw—to find it a straw.

Memory promptly reminded him that on almost the last occasion he dined at his employer's, Mr Girdleton had told his wife, across the table, that 'Peters' children were down with mumps,' and Mrs Girdleton had replied, 'I will see about the soup and things to-morrow morning,' in a tone which showed that she received such news as notice that modest luxuries were expected. Mr Girdleton was a kind master and cared for the wants of his dependents when they or their families were ill. The intimation that Mrs Welks was ill, would have been given as a matter of course, and Annie would have heard of it.

Well, there was an end to the business, anyhow; no offer of reward would produce the missing portion of the Raphael; without doubt Annie had destroyed it for fear of detection, before she realised the extent of the mischief she had done. Poor child; she must have suffered terribly ever since.

'You are looking seedy this morning,' said Mr Girdleton, stopping at Eltham's desk on his way to his own room, next day. He eyed the young man keenly, and his tone was the tone of accusation, not of sympathetic inquiry.

*'It's nothing; I slept badly last night.'*

Mr Girdleton drummed with his knuckles upon the desk for a minute; then told Eltham to come inside.

'You promised me that you would not hold any communication with my girl,' he said, 'and a couple of days ago a letter addressed to her in your handwriting came to my house. I don't know and don't care what prompted you to break your promise; you chose to do it, and the letter was sent on.'

Eltham could not explain: he stood looking miserable.

'Also I have seen the man Welks hanging about here, and am told by Peters that he comes to see you; that you had given him money, and had promised to try and get him a job. Now, Eltham, this looks bad; it shows a nasty spirit towards myself considering the circumstances under which I turned the man off.'

Eltham coloured, began to say that he had given the man money, remembered himself, and broke off abruptly. Mr Girdleton lay back in his chair, and looked into vacancy tapping his finger-tips.

'You told me, after what passed between us on a certain occasion, Eltham, that you wished to leave. I dissuaded you for your own sake and your mother's; I see now that I made a mistake.' He paused as if expecting an answer; at another time Eltham would have expressed his readiness to take a month's notice; to-day

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he was too dull and dispirited to try and save his dignity.

'I think we had better part, Eltham; I don't wish to deal hardly with you, but you have not treated me fairly in the two matters I've referred to, and my faith in you has been badly shaken. You had better look out for something else to do. I'll give you three months' salary or a quarter's notice, which ever you prefer.'

Eltham said he would decide that day, and went out, conscious of a vague sense of injustice.

'I wonder if he thought I wrote asking Annie to bolt with me,' he thought, as he took his seat. 'He must feel bitter against the wretched Welks.'

To clear himself by telling Mr Girdleton the truth, was out of the question: it did occur to him to write again to Annie and tell her how he was placed, when she—if he knew her aright—would surely confess and enable him to clear himself. But the idea of putting any such pressure upon her was repugnant to him; and, after all, when she heard of his dismissal and the reasons, through her mother, she would of course make a clean breast of the matter. Meantime, he would look out for something else to do.

'Pleasant interview?' inquired Dean, the correspondence clerk, with a sympathising grin.

'Sack,' responded Eltham briefly. 'I'll tell you about it presently.'

Mr Girdleton was out of temper that day; this misfortune was plain to every one before he had been in the office an hour. One clerk got a wiggling for laughing out loud, another was threatened with dismissal for misdirecting an envelope, and a third was told that if he couldn't copy a letter without missing out half-a-dozen words in each page, he had better go back to school again.

'It's a blessing the old man has to go out to-day,' remarked Dean, 'though I don't envy him a journey to the Surrey side on a morning like this.'

It was more like a January day than one of mid-July, wet, stormy, and raw; the streets were deserted, and the man at the one turnstile in use yawned for lack of occupation; the only visitors were stray country cousins who, Peters said, did each a shilling's worth of harm to the carpets with such muddy boots and dripping waterproofs.

'It's the Bidder meeting-day, isn't it?' said Eltham. 'I had forgotten it.'

Depression reigned within and without; but there was a general clearing of brows when Mr Girdleton came out of his room and sent for a hansom, announcing that he should be back at four o'clock.

'Say half-past five,' remarked Dean, when his employer had gone. 'I never knew the function over earlier.'

When Master Jonas Bidder of the Worshipful Company of Wheelwrights, was gathered to his fathers at the end of the seventeenth century, he bequeathed the rents yielded by a certain piece of land on the Surrey side of the river to trustees, citizens of substance and good repute,

who were to administer the same for the benefit of the deserving poor of the parish. The value of Master Bidder's property having increased about three hundredfold since his lamented decease, the trust had attained dimensions involving considerable responsibility, and the trustees fairly earned their fees, and the 'fayre satisfying dinner' to which they were by will entitled once a quarter. This dinner was to be eaten at 'four of the clock,' and Master Bidder had prescribed that all business should be done first—a provision which appears to indicate that the testator understood his kind. Lately, however, three eminent Q.C.s had mercifully given it as their opinion that it would not invalidate the will of Master Bidder if the meal were eaten at 1.30 and called lunch; so the hour had been changed; and as the trust solicitor, the clergy of the parish, and one or two others had to attend, that 'fayre satisfying' dinner was always a very pleasant little gathering indeed.

'It's a ghastly day to drag a man over here to eat his lunch,' said Mr Bent, the senior trustee, as he shook hands with Mr Girdleton.

'A great nuisance for a busy man in any weather,' said Mr Girdleton. It had been the fashion ever since the trust was founded, for the trustees to regard themselves as martyrs.

'I suppose you haven't heard anything from the Scotland Yard people yet?' queried Mr Bent.

'Not a word. They told me the other day, they believed that the piece had been taken abroad.'

'There isn't a detective worthy of the name in London,' said Mr Bent. 'Now, in Paris they'd have laid the rascals by the heels within a week.'

The other trustees arriving in a body at this moment, the solicitor and the vicar produced their accounts for last quarter, and scheme of charity for next; which were rather hastily approved, for lunch had been announced.

It was a very jovial party: the Lion Hotel has an admirable cook, and he always does his best to reconcile the Bidder trustees to that clause in the will which insists that the quarterly meeting and dinner shall be held on the Bidder estate. It was raining hard, and the trustees, conscience-clear, having transacted the business and drawn their fees, were inclined to make the most of the occasion; so after lunch they adjourned to the billiard-room for pool. It was five o'clock when Mr Bent observed that he must be off, and the party broke up.

'This isn't mine, waiter,' exclaimed Mr Girdleton with singular vehemence, returning the hat that functionary offered with his coat, 'That's not mine; find my hat at once; my name's in it.'

'Is it an antique, Girdleton?' inquired a humorous fellow-trustee in surprise at his heat.

Mr Girdleton took no notice of the chaff; for the waiter in all humility was expressing his profound regret. The gentleman who had just gone must have taken Mr Girdleton's hat by mistake. Should he run after—

'No,' snapped Mr Girdleton, 'give me his,

and help me on—quick!’ and he ran out of the hotel, his overcoat half-way up his arms.

‘Bent will go across Hungerford Bridge,’ called the trustee who had made the little joke about antiques.

Mr Girdleton heard, and ran along the street at his best pace; the rain had stopped, but the wind had increased since the morning. It was only a few hundred yards from the hotel to the bridge, and Mr Girdleton ran regardless of the cheers of the little boys, who assured him he ‘would win.’ Arriving at the bottom of the wooden gangway which runs up to the foot-bridge beside the railway, he saw his friend turn the corner at the top, his hand to the hat which did not belong to him. Mr Girdleton felt the one he wore too large, and the sight of Mr Bent holding on to the misappropriated hat seemed to inspire him afresh. He panted up the slope and raced along the bridge, shouting; Mr Bent heard him at last and stopped.

‘You—took my—hat,’ gasped Mr Girdleton, breathless with exertion as he came up.

‘Now, I *thought* it was small for me,’ smiled Mr Bent. ‘I’m so sorry’—his hand went up to his head with apologetic haste. Mr Girdleton nearly shrieked aloud; for his friend touched the hat below the brim, the wind caught it, and off it went. It alighted on the rail, hesitated for the fraction of a second, and took a suicidal leap into the river.

‘Girdleton, you shouldn’t run like that; you look quite pale, man. D’you feel ill?’

‘It’s gone,’ came from Mr Girdleton’s lips, as he watched his property dancing seawards on the wavelets.

‘I’m awfully sorry for my clumsiness and stupidity.—No, no, keep mine and send it back. And, Girdleton, I must see you into a cab; really you look very ill.’

Mr Girdleton admitted that he felt ‘rather giddy,’ and allowed himself to be escorted back to the Surrey side, where a cab was soon procured.

‘Bond Street,’ said Mr Girdleton faintly, as he got in. Mr Bent studied his face for a moment; then gave the cabman Mr Girdleton’s private address and got in with him.

‘I’ll just see you home,’ he said; ‘it isn’t out of my way.’ And Mr Girdleton’s faint protest only the more strongly convinced his friend that he ought to have somebody with him.

Meantime a peaceful day at the gallery was drawing to its close; five o’clock came bringing no Mr Girdleton, and six, and quarter-past. At half-past six, Dean declared his certainty that ‘the old man’ would wish them not to wait longer, and the rest agreed. Eltham alone remained to write some letters before going home. It was after seven o’clock when, having finished his correspondence, he stood at the door opening his umbrella in preparation for the walk down the rain-swept street.

‘Pardon, gentleman, please,’ said a miserable-looking man at his elbow, ‘is this ’ere the Girdleton Gall’ry?’

‘Yes; but what do you want?’

‘Me and my mate picked up this ’ere on the water,’ said the man, producing the disreputable

remains of a silk hat from under his ragged coat; ‘it’s got the gen’leman’s name in it, and maybe he’d give me a sixpence for my trouble bringing it.’

Eltham glanced at the name to which the man pointed; it was his employer’s hat without doubt, but in its present condition it was not worth the sixpence referred to. It was a pure begging errand, but the fellow looked so wet and wretched, that Eltham, bidding him come in out of the rain, searched in his pocket for the coin desired.

‘There’s a shilling for you,’ he said, touched by a hollow cough which instinct told him was not the artistic stroke of the professional beggar. ‘You’d better leave the hat,’ he added, more as a matter of principle than for any other reason, seeing that the man eyed it with the eye of an appraiser, doubtless with the view of sale at a third-hand clothes-shop.

‘Thank’ee, sir; thank’ee kindly,’ and he crept out.

‘Blown off crossing the bridge, I suppose,’ thought Eltham, poking the wreck with his umbrella. ‘I’ll just put it in his room since it’s been brought back.’

He lifted the hat on his umbrella, and it struck him that it was heavier than even a soaked hat ought to be. The lining was torn at the seam, and idle curiosity to see how silk hats are made prompted him to pull it apart. As he did so he started. Surely, surely Lincoln and Bennett never— He put down his umbrella, shut the office door and lit the gas. Then to the hat again; he turned up the sodden leather lining and pressed back the silk. For fully five minutes he sat staring into the hat he held in both hands. He could not realise what lay before his eyes; amazement, joy, and half-a-dozen conflicting emotions whirled through his brain and stunned him. For there, carefully fitted in between the silk and the outer skin of the hat, was the lost piece of the Raphael!

It was some little time before he recovered from the shock of this astounding discovery; when he did, he got paper and made the hat and its precious contents into a parcel. He was rapidly grasping the value of the find to himself and knew what he was going to do. Before leaving the office, he wrote a line to Annie Girdleton saying that he now understood her note, and respected the feeling which prompted it. And in his heart he hated himself for having suspected her.

‘She was his unconscious tool,’ he thought, as he walked homewards with that thrice precious parcel under his arm. ‘He gave her the note to leave, and followed it up with his knife when the coast was clear. Well, we will have another interview to-morrow morning, and I hope he will enjoy it.’

Eltham was greatly exercised that night to know why Mr Girdleton should have done such an injury to the most valuable work he had ever possessed. He was far too experienced and shrewd to have imagined for a moment that the resultant sensation, no matter how assiduously fanned, would produce results at all commensurate with the damage done. Of course it was a foregone conclusion that he meant to

'discover' the piece himself and enjoy another innings, but even with that addition it was dead loss.

'And really,' thought Eltham, with the careless generosity of power, 'I don't see why he should not have another innings if he likes. I wonder whether he took the detectives into confidence or bamboozled them.'

He was on the best terms with himself next day when he knocked at the door of the Girdletons' new house in Queen's Square; a message had come to the gallery to tell them that Mr Girdleton was confined to the house with a bad cold. Twice a message was sent down that his employer could not see him; but a pencilled note to say 'hat restored and safe with me,' procured him instant admission to Mr Girdleton's bedroom, where, we have it on the highest authority, the pair remained closeted for an hour and a half.

What passed between them during the interview, nobody knows. Mrs Girdleton, happening to intrude without knocking, heard her husband say, 'I'll take Trotter's opinion before closing such a bargain another time,' before he could ask with a snarl if she did not know he was engaged. Mrs Girdleton knew very well what opinion her husband had hitherto entertained of Mr Trotter as a critic, so she was naturally a good deal surprised. Then, a few minutes later, she had occasion to go into the dressing-room, and through the door of communication overheard her spouse say in answer to a question whose purport she did not catch: 'Only safe place I could think of, and had had it there all the week while changing houses,' which was a very odd thing to say, she thought.

What followed the interview, everybody concerned remembers distinctly. Eltham lunched with Mrs Girdleton, and returning to the gallery in course of the afternoon, mentioned casually that he was going to stay on, after all. Annie, next morning, received letters from her mother and from Eltham, couched in a strain which brought her back to London at once; and ten days later, when Mr Girdleton was able to leave his room (it was a bad cold and turned to influenza), Eltham came to dinner and placed on Annie's finger an engagement ring, while her father looked on and smiled. These things happened last July, and important developments are imminent, though Eltham's salary has not been raised (if the gallery pay-sheet is reliable), and the defect of age has been mended by only a twelvemonth.

Mr Welks has resumed his duties as night-watchman, and his inability to throw any light upon the events of that Sunday is the despair of everybody in the gallery: it is his peculiar humour to refer to Richard Eltham as 'the gov'nor,' though Mr Girdleton has not retired. The more robust section of the press, getting wind of something, winked in paragraphs for a while and let the matter drop; but Scotland Yard preserves an impenetrable reticence. From the circumstance that Mr Girdleton frequently refers with admiration to the wonderful sagacity of the London detective department, and declares he has not yet given up hope, there is reason

to suppose that the stolen piece of the Raphael will be publicly discovered before long; perhaps this season, if there be room for a sensation.

## AN OLD GEOGRAPHY.

SOME few years ago, a couple of schoolboys were exploring a traditional smugglers' cave under a chalk cliff on the Kentish coast. Shut in by the tide, they climbed to an almost inaccessible ledge near the roof of the cavern, not because there was any danger from the sea, but to while away the time in true boyish fashion. Lying there was an old leather-bound volume, a Geography of the date 1716. Perhaps a studious smuggler, or a colleague of Exciseman Gill, or, possibly, another school-lad of the days of George I., had laid it down, to be found, long years afterwards, a relic of the times when a youngster could still revel in dreams of great undiscovered lands, of buccaneering on the Spanish Main, or of hot brushes with Mounseer in the Channel. Maybe, a tragedy of drowning or of sudden death in fierce conflict on a coast which abounds in memories of bloody frays, was the reason for the book being left in this out-of-the-way spot. Anyhow, there it was, in excellent preservation, and with the name of Thomas Gibbs of Canterbury fairly set forth in good old copy-book style on the first page. On the supposition that every average boy knows more or less what a school geography is, this standard work of 1716 would be interesting to him if only for the maps. As regards the story of our own empire, however, a perusal would be still more so. In glancing at the contents, we must remember that it means not simply a contrast between a text-book of nearly two hundred years ago and one of to-day, but a comparison between our empire of then and now, and a look at the various political changes and geographical discoveries which have come to pass since the adventures of Alexander Selkirk gave birth to *Robinson Crusoe*.

The author, in dedicating his work to the Archbishop of Canterbury, piously expresses an earnest wish for the conversion of the Jews, which prayer would seem to show that the Israelites must have made quick headway here since Cromwell allowed them to enter the country little more than half a century previously. In the maps, California appears as an island; whilst that portion of America lying between Hudson Bay and Behring Strait is a blank. Indeed, the coast from California to Behring Strait is not marked out. Much the same may be said of the interior of Asia, and of course New Holland, or Australia, as we now call it. The strait between Tasmania and the mainland has not yet been discovered by Bass, who was afterwards to languish out the remainder of his existence in the depths of a South American mine. New Zealand

figures as a mere bit of vague shading; and the Sandwich Islands, where Captain Cook had yet to meet his fate, are nowhere. The most curious and interesting thing about the maps, however, is, that two large equatorial lakes are given as the sources of the Nile; and the Niger is made to flow from another great lake situated near where Tchad is now known to be. Thus it seems that the Nyanza lakes and Tchad were known by hearsay early in the last century. Stanley, indeed, has stated that some old Venetian maps indicated their existence.

So much for the progress of discovery; but what about political changes since 1716, especially with regard to our own empire? Canada belonged to France, and England possessed her Plantation colonies, which were by-and-by to become the United States; but the bulk of known America—with the exception of a few islands and a fringe of coast here and there—was ruled by Spain. On the map of Europe, Turkey is credited with sovereignty over Hungary and Greece, although the author remarks that the Hungarians had 'almost recovered from Ottoman slavery by the late successful progress of the Imperial arms'—grim experiences, in which the Elector of Hanover, afterwards to rule over these islands as George I., smelt powder and bore himself in a very soldier-like fashion. Finland and the Baltic Provinces are set down as Swedish territories. Poland has a map to herself, as a powerful and independent nation. Belgium is called a circle of the German empire; Corsica, a Genoese island; and Naples, a Spanish viceroyalty. Greater Britain was indeed in its infancy, for, with the exception of our American colonies, we had then but few foreign possessions—Canada, South Africa, and India being as yet unconquered, and Australia hardly known. We read that 'the king of Sweden is indeed a powerful prince both by sea and land.' The Czar is praised for his late visits to foreign countries, but roundly rated for his recent attempt on his Christian neighbour, Sweden. These were the days of Peter the Great and the birth of modern Russia as a European power, when the Crimea was Turkish, and Caucasasia and Central Asia as yet untrodden by victorious Muscovite legionaries. Little did the half-savage champion of civilisation dream in his most ambitious moments that the time would come when Cossack and Red Coat would confront one another as sentinels on the north-west frontier of India!

We read further on that in France 'the present monarch for despotic power may now vie even with the Emperors of Muscovia, China, and Turkey.' '89 and the Terror were still far distant; and Louis XV., who bequeathed the Deluge to his ill-fated successor, had only just begun his long reign of waste and wickedness. The Bastille was in constant use; and Voltaire—whose writings did something to bring about the Revolution—was as yet a young man, unknown to fame. We learn that 'the Dutch have lately advanced themselves to such a

height of power and treasure as to become terrible even to crowned heads,' but then men were still living who had heard the Dutch cannon thundering in the Thames. Among the nine Electors of Germany, the Dukes of Bavaria, Saxony, and Brandenburg are mentioned; and the Empire consisted of more than three hundred States. The heroic campaigns of the Great Frederick brought Prussia to the front in the last century; the ruthless invasions of Napoleon smashed up the old multiplicity of petty sovereignties at the beginning of the present; and Bismarck and Moltke in our own times have created the united Germany of to-day. In Spain, all religions other than the Romish were 'expelled by the tyranny of the bloody Inquisition,' a state of things which lasted well into the times of our grandfathers. Italy is described as consisting of half-a-dozen Dukedoms, the territories of the Pope, four Republics, and the Viceroyalty of Naples, 'miserably flayed by those hungry and rapacious vultures the Spaniards.' This is very much the style of expression used by the hero of *Westward Ho!* Italy remained in this chaotic condition until Garibaldi and his fellow-patriots worked out the unity of the youngest of the six great powers. Our geographer was not long in noticing, during his travels in the Levant, that modern Greek differed much from the ancient in the pronunciation. 'The whole of Greece doth now groan under the Turkish yoke.'

The spelling of Scotch names seems to have been somewhat uncertain. For example, we find in the list of counties, Boot, Arren, Argile, and Edenburgh. Scotland gets a good character just after the Union from the patriotic author, Mr Gordon, whether on the score of products, religion, or education. 'No Christian society excels the Scotch for their exact observance of the Sabbath.' Orkney islanders seldom died of the physician, but lived to a great age. The Shetlanders still spoke the Norse tongue. The Icelanders were remarkable for great bodily strength and longevity, and commonly lived in dens or caves 'keeping up their ancient idolatry.'

Formentaria in the Balearics was uninhabited on account of serpents. Malta was governed by the Crusading Knights of St John. The Ionian Islands belonged to Venice, who had just lost Crete, after a bloody and protracted struggle with the Turks. Fancy the Sick Man as a conqueror nowadays! 'At a Greek monastery in Cyprus are a number of cats so nicely bred for the hunting of serpents, that at the first sound of the convent bell they will immediately return home.' This sounds very like the hoax of some mendacious monk.

Turning to Asia, we read that some remarkable volcanoes exist in Tartary, India, and China. In spite of this error, however, the author has a truer idea of the variety of languages, religions, and races in the dominions of the Great Mogul than the average Englishman of to-day has. 'Some Jews dwelling on the shores of the Caspian are thought to be descendants of the lost ten tribes.' Tea is not named among the products of China; but 'taffaties and satins' are given among those of India. A pillar near Scanderoon Bay is considered by

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the writer to mark the exact spot where Jonah was vomited by the whale, 'being nearer to Nineveh than any other place in the Levant.' Noting the deplorable state of Palestine under the Turks, our big cities are bidden, as dens of iniquity, to take warning. The statements that the 'Japanners' are tall, and that Adam's Peak, in Ceylon, is a volcano, are, to say the least of it, inaccuracies.

Coming to Africa, we learn that Algiers and Tunis were two potent Republics, much given to piracy. 'In Loango, it is usual to sell human flesh publicly in the shambles, as other nations do beef and mutton'—a curiously precise anticipation of what was reported of some Congo tribes at the British Association in 1895.

With respect to America, we are told that New Spain, or Mexico, is governed by a Spanish Viceroy. 'California, formerly esteemed a peninsula, is now found to be entirely surrounded with water, a dry, barren, cold country, still in the hands of the natives.' The French of Canada were about six thousand in number, and traded chiefly in furs. 'This is all that is noteworthy about it.' The French also owned a great part of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland; and we are reminded of our fishery dispute with France by the statement that 'after the late tedious war, we are now in full possession of what we formerly enjoyed.'

'In the English colonies, no tax can be imposed without the consent of their assemblies,' a fact which it would have been better had George III. remembered fifty years later. Enthusiasm chiefly prevailed in Pennsylvania, 'that country being stocked with Quakers.' Our author attributes such fierceness to the condor, that he says: 'Chile would not be habitable were that destructive bird less rare.' As for Jamaica, which was then, perhaps, our wealthiest colony, the recent terrible earthquake of 1692 is ascribed 'rather to moral than natural causes, on account of the abominations of the inhabitants calling for judgment from Heaven.' The planters are solemnly warned to care for the despised souls of their negro slaves, and not to believe and be frightened by the vulgar error that baptism of slaves means giving them freedom. We are assured, on the authority of eye-witnesses, 'that the crocodile of Hayti before lying in wait to catch prey, swallows several hundredweight of pebbles, by which additional weight he can the sooner dive with his victim.'

Our geographer appends a very clear table of the five great colonial empires of 1716—namely, the Spanish, English, French, Dutch, and Portuguese. It is impossible to glance at this old book without being struck by the magnitude of the revolutions which have taken place in the last two centuries through scientific progress, geographical discovery, and political changes. In 1716, Sweden, Holland, and Turkey were still regarded as mighty factors in European wars and complications; the Great Mogul was still considered one of the most powerful monarchs of the world; and the empire of the king of Spain might still be described as one on which the sun never set. Australia, New Zealand, and almost the whole interior of Africa, were blanks; and the gigantic

Republic of America undreamed of by the most ardent imagination. But the most striking fact of all is, whether under the Union-jack or the Stars and Stripes, the stupendous march of the Anglo-Saxon race.

## A WEST AFRICAN STORY.

By the Author of *Rising of the Brass Men*.

BEHIND the coast-line of West Africa, from the Gambia to the Congo, lies a wild country of dense forest and dismal swamp intersected here and there by sluggish rivers and shallow lagoons. Although the Portuguese, Dutch, and English have traded along the coast for more than four hundred years, civilisation has but lightly touched the savage inhabitants of the interior, and 'battle, murder, and sudden death,' the 'Ju Ju' or fetich worship, with its horrible rites of human sacrifice, and in many places cannibalism, are prevalent.

In British dominions, a few District Commissioners and other officers in charge of small detachments of Haussas, who are Mohammedan black troops, maintain, or struggle to maintain, some kind of order along the frontier, among many thousands of savages.

Now it happened that one morning in April, Captain Wayne, in command of a dozen Haussas, sat out on the veranda of his house, which was situated near the head-waters of a muddy river on the frontier of the Gold Coast and the Shantee country, and looked across the misty landscape that lay before him. By-and-by as the sun rose the mist gathered itself together into heavy wreaths and rolled away to seek a hiding-place till nightfall among the swamps, leaving open to view mile after mile of dense forest that stretched away to the blue line of distant mountains on the northern horizon, while near at hand three winding rivers and a wide lagoon lay glittering in the early sunshine.

The captain lay wearily back in his chair, haggard and yellow-faced from constant attacks of the malaria fever, the scourge of the land, and oppressed by the intense loneliness, for he had seen no white man for more than a year. Instead of the slight coolness that might have been hoped for in the morning breeze, the air was hot and heavy with the smell of vegetation rotting in the swamps and the river mud.

At this moment, Akoo, sergeant of Haussas, came up the stairway leading to the veranda, and saluting the officer, said: 'Bush man come in, sah, bring little word, say Kasro people chop two men, make Ju Ju.'

'Hang the Kasro people,' said the captain aside. 'I must stop the Ju Ju sacrifice, and yet if there's any bloodshed, it will mean the sending up of an expedition, and unending trouble. Akoo, get ten men ready, rifles and twenty rounds of ammunition.'

The sergeant saluted as he went away, and shortly afterwards a bugle-call rang out and Captain Wayne, weak and trembling from fever, marched into the forest at the head of his men. Tall, splendidly developed negroes from the far north, staunch Mussulmans, lighter in colour and in every way superior to the coast tribes, the Haussas will follow their white officers with a courage and devotion equal to that of any of Her Majesty's troops.

Meantime, in the Shantee town of Kasro, a great Ju Ju feast was being held at which the chief administered justice, and various rites were performed by the fetich men to propitiate their gods. The mud-built, palm-thatched huts lay in rows beneath the shade of feathery palm trees around a great open square. In the centre of this, beneath the shade of a huge tree consecrated to the Ju Ju or fetich gods, sat chief Kasro, attired in a cast-off steamboat officer's uniform and a dragoon's brass helmet. Over his head stretched the spreading arms of the tree from which hung long strings of charms, human skulls, bones, sharks' teeth, leopards' claws, and similar odds and ends, the symbol of the fetich authority, for over native warfare, trade and justice, or rather injustice, the Ju Ju man reigns supreme. Round the king stood rows of native warriors, naked with the exception of a narrow strip of cloth round the loins, while the whole of the square was filled by an excited crowd of men and women, equally scantily attired, singing and dancing in groups round a crouching musician tapping the native skin drum, firing their long flintlock guns in the air, or reeling about hopelessly intoxicated with palm wine. Two stalwart slaves held a large umbrella, the symbol of authority, over the chief's head, while on either side stood a Ju Ju man to act as counsellor, as the chief dismissed one after another the trembling prisoners who awaited his sentence. Lying on the ground bound hand and foot with palm fibre were two men evidently of a different tribe, entirely naked, their black skins shining as the perspiration beads rose upon them, for they were purposely placed in the fierce glare of the sun, and smudged the stripes of white clay with which they were daubed.

When the last criminal was led trembling away, the two Ju Ju priests advanced towards a fire of scented wood, round which lay a number of brass vessels; and as the chief raised his hand a bloodthirsty roar broke from the excited crowd, while the guards dragged forward the white-painted victims, and loosening their bands, placed one on either side of the fire. A huge naked negro with a necklace of bones now advanced, a heavy straight sword in his hand, while the priests threw armfuls of an aromatic wood on the fire, so that the whole square was filled with the odour. The executioner stepped forward and swung his sword round his head, while a fresh howl like that of a pack of hungry wolves burst from the crowd, when the chief rose to his feet and ordered him to desist.

Towards the outside of the square the crowd were shouting, pushing, and struggling, and a few moments later fell away left and right,

while down the clear passage came Captain Wayne at the head of ten Haussas with fixed bayonets. His Karki uniform was torn and plastered with mud, and the captain between weakness and fever could scarcely stand erect. But keeping himself in hand by a desperate effort he walked up to the two shivering wretches and laid his hand on the shoulder of the nearest; then turning to the chief, he said in his own tongue: 'I demand these men, in the name of the White Queen.'

There was a roar of fury from the crowd, while the chief, waving his hand for silence, said: 'I wish you no harm, go in peace, for I desire no war with the White Queen; but it is not good to meddle with the gods of the Shantee. Wherefore go while you are safe, before my people tear you limb from limb.'

'Though we are but one white man and ten Haussas, yet for every one of us who die, we will kill ten of your people. Also the arm of the Queen is long, and afterwards the troops will come and burn your town and stamp it flat.'

As he spoke, the captain fixed his eyes on the chief's face, and the latter lowered his head and moved uneasily, then he whispered for a little with his Ju Ju priests. At length he lifted his hand and said: 'Your words are good; take the men and go in peace.'

At the head of his troopers the captain turned and faced the angry crowd, the prisoners, now unbound, standing between two files of Haussas. In front and on every side surged a furious mob shouting and shaking their barbed spears and flintlock guns.

'Fix bayonets, Haussas—march!' called the captain, as he drew his revolver, and the angry negroes fell away on either side before the line of glistening steel and the calm unmoved man. So they passed slowly and deliberately through the village, while the natives howled and shook their spears and guns, none daring to strike the first blow.

The captain's heart thumped, and his breath came in quick gasps through his parched mouth and throat, for he knew that the slightest accident would provoke a bloody encounter, in which every man of the little party would be wiped out, after which the colony would have to undertake a little expedition in punishment, that would cost much money and blood. However, coolness and courage won the day, and they reached the last hut scathless. Here the crowd swept upon them with a rush, but stopped when the bright steel held by the unmoved Haussas lay within an inch of their naked breasts, and one savage, stooping under the line of the bayonets, drove a light spear into the captain's leg. Instantly the latter raised his revolver and moved his arm until the bead of the foresight rested on the centre of the black forehead. Another instant and a fierce fight and the subsequent annihilation of the party would have followed, but the self-control of the officer was equal to the occasion. He lowered the revolver, and stooping down, broke off the haft of the slender spear; then he called out: 'I will come again with more soldiers for that man; Haussas—advance.'

The troopers took a step forward, and as the bayonets pricked their flesh, the crowd opened up on either side and the little band marched out of the village.

With clenched teeth the captain held his place until they were out of sight among the trees, then the reaction from the strain set in, and weak and broken down with fever and the pain of his wound he pitched forward head foremost into a clump of the fragrant African lilies. How he regained the station he never knew, but the faithful Haussas, who would follow an officer they admire down into Hades if he bade them, after much difficulty at last carried him into his room, where he lay for many hours in a troubled sleep.

Awakening, he found himself burning with fever, in a room which had the temperature of an oven, while through the open window little draughts of air like the breath of a furnace played in and out.

Calling Sergeant Akoo, who had faithfully watched every moment while he slept, to raise him, he passed his hand down his wounded thigh till his fingers touched the iron head of the spear. Now there are many kinds of West African spears; a few carry a merciful leaf-shaped head, but many have points covered with cruel barbs and hooks, so that once in the flesh it is impossible to pluck them out. The one that lay cankering in the captain's leg was of a curiously devilish kind, fashioned like a double corkscrew, and, driven in with a twist, could not be drawn out.

'Akoo,' said the captain, 'bring in two privates to hold my hands—and my big hunting-knife.'

When they came, he neither groaned nor lost consciousness till the ghastly operation was over, then his head dropped forward and he swooned away, while his trusty followers stopped the flow of blood. 'By the beard of the prophet,' said Sergeant Akoo, in the vernacular, 'but that is a man.'

Next morning the captain sent a trooper a hundred miles through the forest to ask that a relief might be sent, then he lay day after day in a canvas chair on the veranda, alternately shivering and burning with fever, and unable to move on account of his injured leg, which obstinately refused to heal. One weary week succeeded another, while the captain watched the white mists roll away at dawn, and the sun rise and shine all day with a pitiless heat out of a cloudless sky. The same panorama of solemn forest and glistening river stretched itself before his weary eyes, until his heart was as sick as his fevered body, and he feared his brain would give way. Meanwhile, Sergeant Akoo, who could neither read nor write, patrolled the country, and ruled as supreme monarch many thousands of natives; but the messenger never returned. Then one day a bushman came in by night with a letter from the nearest Government station to say that a wounded Hausa with a handful of cast-iron potleg shot into his body had one day dragged himself to the compound, and after holding out a letter, turned over and died; faithful unto death, for this is the

nature of the Mohammedan soldier. The message had been forwarded to headquarters, and the reply now reached the captain.

Calling a trooper to move his pillows and raise him, he broke the seal and read that no relief could be sent for some time, as there was no officer available, but that he had full authority to abandon the post for the time being, if his health necessitated such a course.

Now the captain was a simple man, not given to any heroics, but he had lived so long away from white men, that he had no thought left but the well-being of his district; so he said, for these dwellers in lonely wilds soon learn to think aloud: 'It is a temptation. If I stay here I shall go out before the rains, and if I go, there will be war, gorgeous war, between two or three of the chiefs, and the Government will send up an expedition and the district will be broken up for ever. No—I must stay and keep them in order—and face the fever and mortification. The event is with Allah, as Akoo says.'

He despatched another messenger, begging that an officer from a peaceable district should be sent, as the post could not be left. Then the weary waiting commenced again, and the dreary stifling days had to be faced somehow, with heat and fever, constant suffering from the wound and the dreadful loneliness. Still the captain held on, giving the sergeant fresh orders every morning, and listening to his reports of the day's work in the evening, while he daily grew thinner and more haggard; a miserable handful of bones and feeble flickering life, doing his small share in upholding the supremacy of our great empire.

But no reply arrived from headquarters, and at length Sergeant Akoo paused one morning before he called out his men and said: 'No book (letter) come, sah, bush man chop Hausa and 'teal him letter, but captain send more book and all Hausa fit to go.'

'No,' said the captain, 'I can't have my men cut off one by one, neither can I purchase relief with the death of my troopers. Did not King David say something of the kind about the water from the well of Bethlehem, which is beside the gate—the price of brave men's blood?'

Then he worried and tried experiments to see if his brain was losing its power, while the black sergeant and his troopers represented Her Majesty's Government and maintained the Queen's peace on the frontier.

By-and-by the rains came, and the captain's couch had to be moved inside; for the whole air was filled with the falling water, the rivers overflowed and every swamp was turned into a lake, while the house was filled with a steam that reeked of fever and dysentery. So the commissioner lay through the weary weeks listening to the constant roar of water on the roof, and the murmur of the flooded river, growing weaker and weaker, yet fighting a grim fight against despair and insanity.

At last the long-expected relief arrived, and the incoming officer found a ghastly, fever-worn skeleton that gazed at him with glittering eyes and whispered in a hoarse voice: 'Thank God!

—'I've kept the station,' then collapsed, and lay speechless and silent, a wreck of what had once been a man.

Next morning, under command of Sergeant Akoo, eight bearers left the station carrying Captain Wayne in a hammock, and for fourteen days they stumbled along, through great forests of cotton-wood and mahogany trees, wading among dismal swamps, paddling across broad lagoons and down solitary river reaches. Now they journeyed all day by canoe through strange tunnel-like waterways, among the mangrove trees, then by dry land through patches of plumed swamp grass that met above their heads, or through forest glades where the ground lay carpeted by the fragrant African lily.

But the gaunt figure in the hammock saw none of these things, and the glittering eyes only opened when Sergeant Akoo raised the sufferer's head, and poured a few spoonfuls of food or drops of brandy down his throat.

Sixteen days after the captain left the station, three men sat in the long bare room of a trader's house, built on high piles, looking out over the sea at Axim.

The windows were wide open, and through them you could see, beneath the arches of the palm branches, the boundless stretch of the Atlantic, and a long yellow beach where the great blue rollers broke in sheets of snowy foam; while the roar of the surf, and the smell of flowers, burning wood, rotting leaves and mud, which is the breath of the Dark Continent, came in with every passing puff of hot air.

Lying on a canvas couch under the window was the wasted figure of Captain Wayne, who opened his eyes as the doctor leaned over him and smiled as he murmured: 'You are very kind—yes, I'm better already—and I'm going home to-morrow—don't forget to signal for the steamer to call.'

'Then lie down and keep quiet,' said the doctor. 'We'll signal for the steamer'—here he leaned over and called out to the krooboy, 'Hoist the 'teamer flag, Frypan, and fire gun when 'teamer 'live,' then withdrew to a corner, and the three men talked in whispers.

'Has he any chance, doctor?' said the trader.

'He cannot live till they reach Sa Leone, and may die before the steamer arrives here. Think of what the man has gone through; enough to kill ten like me.'

Here they laughed softly, for the doctor had for years waged a grim fight with fever and dysentery, cholera and guinea-worm, to say nothing of pot-shots from Shantees on the frontier.

'Poor fellow,' said the trader, 'he did his best.—Tom, it's Sunday afternoon; see if you can get a tune out of the piano, if it's not rusted to bits and the krooboy's haven't stolen the wire.'

The third person rose and sitting down to the broken-down instrument struck a few low chords, then after various snatches of topical songs which had reached the coast, began slowly an old-fashioned tune to the Magnificat. The doctor and his companion at first laughed: church music was new on the coast, but as the player, gaining confidence in the instrument,

drew out the solemn music, the smile died away and they took off their hats. Chord after chord the sweet old tune rang out, while the thoughts of the listeners passed over leagues of ocean, and they saw again the sweet English meadows, or purple Scottish moor, with its glory of gorse and heather.

The deep thunder of the surf seemed not a disturbing element but a fitting accompaniment, and as the crimson light of the westing sun shone upon his face, the sick man beckoned the faithful sergeant to raise him on his couch. So he lay, gazing westward, with the light bringing a ruddy glow to the ghastly cheeks, listening, while a tear trickled slowly out of the sunken eyes.

Was he thinking of the distant country he had served so faithfully, and loved so well? No one ever knew, for as the last chord of the 'Amen' died away, the tired head drooped forward and he turned to the wall, and so passed away.

To where beyond these voices there is peace.

Then a deep silence fell upon the room, and Sergeant Akoo bent down and drew the sheet over the pallid face, saying as he did so, 'Allah Akbar—God is great—but, by the beard of the prophet, these English be men.' Two days later, when the R.M.S. *Benguela* passed, there was no signal flying for her to stop, and only a low mound and a rough wooden cross showed that another of the brave spirits who daily lay down their lives in lonely forest and fever-haunted swamp had gone to its own place.

#### A SONG IN EXILE.

MINE no more! . . . For other eyes  
All thy beauties now are spread,  
All the rapture of thy skies

When the winds laugh overhead,  
All the boundless moorland ways

Purple with the heather bloom,  
Dusky woods, and hills ablaze

With the glow of yellow broom.  
Careless feet will come and go,

Only I that loved thee so,  
Wander on an alien shore—

Oh, my country, mine no more!

Mine no more!

Still I see in haunting dreams

Loch and glen and valley fair,  
Hear the roar of mountain streams,  
Feel the rush of moorland air;

Every northern wind that blows,  
To my heart some message brings;

Every bird that northward goes  
Bears my greeting on its wings.

Happy winds and wild birds free!  
Would that I, like you, could flee  
To that land beloved of yore—

Oh, my country, mine no more!

Mine no more!

MARY MACLEOD.

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